

Members

Rep. Markt Lytle, Chair
Rep. John Frenz
Rep. William Friend
Rep. Richard Mangus
Sen. David Ford
Sen. Johnny Nugent
Sen. Katie Wolf
Sen. Richard Young



AGRICULTURAL MATTERS EVALUATION COMMITTEE

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 15, 1999
Meeting Time: 11:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St.,
Room 128
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Rep. Markt Lytle, Chair; Rep. John Frenz; Rep. Richard Mangus;
Sen. David Ford; Sen. Katie Wolf.

Members Absent: Rep. William Friend; Sen. Johnny Nugent; Sen. Richard Young.

The first meeting of the Agricultural Matters Evaluation Committee for the 1999 interim was called to order by Rep. Markt Lytle, Chairman of the Committee. After Committee members and staff introduced themselves, Rep. Lytle stated that the purpose of today's meeting was to determine the future direction of the Committee.

Sen. Ford suggested that farmland preservation is an important issue that the Committee should consider. He related his recent experience at a five-day farmland preservation conference studying preservation efforts and strategies in Eastern states that are subject to heavy development pressures (such as NJ, MA, PA, and MD). Sen. Ford stated that successful preservation efforts tend to preserve farmland in contiguous blocks in ways that are consensual with the landowners. He further stated that landowner consent is obtained because the plans offer incentives (such as tax benefits, cash payments from easements, capability of moving development rights from one location to another, etc.).

Sen. Ford added that these preservation efforts have to be done at the local level. However, there may be some need for legislation to provide the tools. The Indiana Farmland Preservation Task Force has been meeting for two years and made recommendations in 1998 to the

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Governor. One of the recommendations that has been implemented was the creation of the Indiana Land Resources Council to provide technical assistance to local communities. Sen. Ford then introduced three individuals who wished to address the Committee.

Mr. Donald Strietelmeier, Hope, IN

Mr. Donald Strietelmeier, representing the Indiana Beef Cattle Association, reported to the Committee that he attended the same conference as Sen. Ford and that he had been surprised by the amount of farmland in that area of the country. He stated that, in order to have agribusiness in the area, the area must also have the farming base, and to have the farming base, there must be farmland. He also stated that the farmland preservation efforts have had good urban support and that OH, MI, and CA are ahead of Indiana in these efforts.

Mr. Strietelmeier described the difference between farmland preservation (a permanent preserving of land) and farmland protection (efforts to increase the protection afforded the owners of farmland). He stated that state leadership is required to provide information, provide mechanisms for local funding, and/or provide state funding for preservation efforts. He added that efforts should be voluntary and should include incentives.

Mr. Strietelmeier, responding to a question from the Committee, stated that if a portion of the proceeds from the sales of environmental license plates were to go toward farmland preservation efforts, more farmers would probably purchase the plate. Rep. Lytle suggested that sufficient funds might be generated from the increased revenues to provide support for some farmland preservation programs.

Sen. Ford suggested that farmland preservation not only benefits rural areas, but could also help to solve some urban problems, as well. By limiting residential and commercial development to areas close to an urban area, the costs of extending utilities could be reduced. Sen. Ford added that communities might even be willing to fund preservation efforts to the extent that a city's future costs from infrastructure improvement could be reduced.

Sen. Wolf suggested approaching the recently-formed Land Resources Council with some ideas. Mr. Strietelmeier suggested that possibilities for local funding include bonding, local income taxes, property taxes, and transfer taxes on real estate. Sen. Ford added that counties have pretty broad discretion with the Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT). Private dollars can be utilized, as well.

Mr. Harold Routson, Greenfield, IN

Mr. Harold Routson, farmer and President of the Wayne County Plan Commission, stated that, even in a county with a zoning history, it still wasn't always good enough. Mr. Routson suggested possible strategies of preserving contiguous blocks of farmland, using permanent easements that stay with a land deed forever, and allowing the transfer of development rights from agricultural areas to more urban or central areas.

Mr. Tom Tully, Rushville, IN

Mr. Tom Tully, farmer, related that he had started farming with 100 acres and was now farming about 650 acres. However, he was finding that developers compete with him for the purchase of land and that farmers need to be very profitable in order to compete. He also stated that agribusiness will leave an area if farmers are not there. He stated that he is a strong supporter of the environmental license plate, some farmers are not.

Mr. Tully suggested that the state should consider emergency programs for farmers that are

hurting financially right now and, thus, help farmers become better able to keep the land. He added that private foundations can help. He also stated that the recently-formed Land Resources Council should be fully implemented and funded to be better able to accomplish farmland preservation goals.

Rep. Lytle suggested to members that the Committee in future meetings should: (1) develop recommendations for the Land Resources Council or for the General Assembly to assist in farmland preservation efforts; (2) discuss the distribution of Tobacco Settlement dollars; and (3) hear testimony and suggestions on the development of infrastructure for the marketing and production of alternative crops as a result of a probable decrease in the production of tobacco. Rep. Lytle suggested having at least two more meetings before October 31, and a possible meeting after October 31, in various locations throughout Indiana.

The next meeting of the Committee was determined to be October 6, 1999, at 1:00 p.m. in a location in Northern Indiana. Primary topics would be consideration of farmland preservation recommendations and to hear a report from the Farm Crisis Committee established by the Lt. Governor.

The third meeting of the Committee is to be held October 21, 1999, at 1:00 p.m. at a location in Southern Indiana. The primary topic for discussion will be the Tobacco Settlement and how the settlement dollars are to be distributed.

(Note: Meeting times and dates are subject to change. Please check the Calendar of Interim Committee Meetings for an up-to-date listing.)

There being no further business to consider, the meeting was adjourned.